

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 18787

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: DEMARTINO VISIT TO US

REF: ROME 16894

1. TODAY'S (DECEMBER 24) PRESS REVEALS THAT PERCEPTIVE POLITICAL JOURNALIST, CITING SOCIALIST SOURCES, HAS FERRETED OUT FULL STORY CONCERNING DEMARTINO'S REQUEST TO US TO CONSIDER POSSIBILITY OF POSTPONING HIS TRIP TO US UNTIL AFTER PSI PARTY CONGRESS.

2. OTHER REPORTS CONFIRM THAT DEMARTINO UNDER STRONG PRESSURE WITHIN HIS PARTY TO POSTPONE VISIT. FURTHER CONFIRMATION PROVIDED BY REMARK OF PSI DEPUTY SECRETARY BETTINO CRAXI WHO, IN PRESENCE OF EMBOFF, EXPRESSED OPEN PERPLEXITY OVER HOW DEMARTINO COULD ABSENT HIMSELF BEFORE CONGRESS. IT IS APPARENT THAT DEMARTINO'S PROJECT FOR A "UNITARY" CONGRESS IN EARLY FEBRUARY HAS RUN INTO TROUBLE, AND THAT PREPARATIONS ARE BEHIND SCHEDULE. IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIALIST PRE-CONGRESSIONAL MANEUVERING FOR GOVERNMENT STABILITY, WHICH HAS MADE THE PSI AN OPPOSITION PARTY IN ALL BUT NAME, ALSO CITED.

3. DESPITE PLAUSIBILITY OF RATIONALES FOR POSTPONEMENT, FEW OBSERVERS ACCEPT THEM AS THE WHOLE EXPLANATION. JOURNALIST WHO BROKE STORY (AIROLDI, LA NAZIONE) SPECULATES THAT SECRE-

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TARY KISSINGER'S CLEAR STATMENTS OF US OPPOSITION BOTH TO ENTRY

OF PCI INTO GOVERNMENT AND TO SO-CALLED ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT HAVE CAUSED SECOND THOUGHTS RE TIMING. ON EVE OF CONGRESS, AIROLDI FEELS DEMARTINO WOULD FIND HIMSELF COMPELLED TO FUDGE OR SPEAK MODERATELY IN THE US, AND THEN ADOPT MAXIMALIST LANGUAGE AT THE CONGRESS TO SATISFY HIS LEFTIST CRITICS. AIROLDI CONCLUDES THAT INCONSISTENCY COULD HURT HIM.

4. COMMENT: THAT DEMARTINO'S WISH TO POSTPONE VISIT IS NOW IN PUBLIC DOMAIN LENDS SOME URGENCY TO GIVING HIM A DEFINITIVE REPLY, AND EMPHASIZED NEED TO HAVE GOOD PROGRAM REASONS FOR HOLDING HIM TO HIS COMMITMENT, IF THE DEPARTMENT SO DECIDES. ON OTHER HAND, IF WE AGREE TO POSTPONEMENT, STORY BREAK HAS ADVANTAGE OF ESTABLISHING BEYOND OBFUSCATION THAT DEFERRAL MADE ON DEMARTINO'S INITIATIVE, AND NOT USG'S. VOLPE

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